

INSTITUTE BOOKLETS

10

EDUCATION

AND

TRADITIONAL VALUES

By

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

विजयविहारी नृवाणी
३५-१३

हिन्दी परिषद्

पराम्नाथक हिन्दी विभाग,

कश्मीर जयकला, पन्ना तथा कश्मीर विश्वविद्यालय

श्रीनगर, कश्मीर।



THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

GOL PARK, CALCUTTA 29



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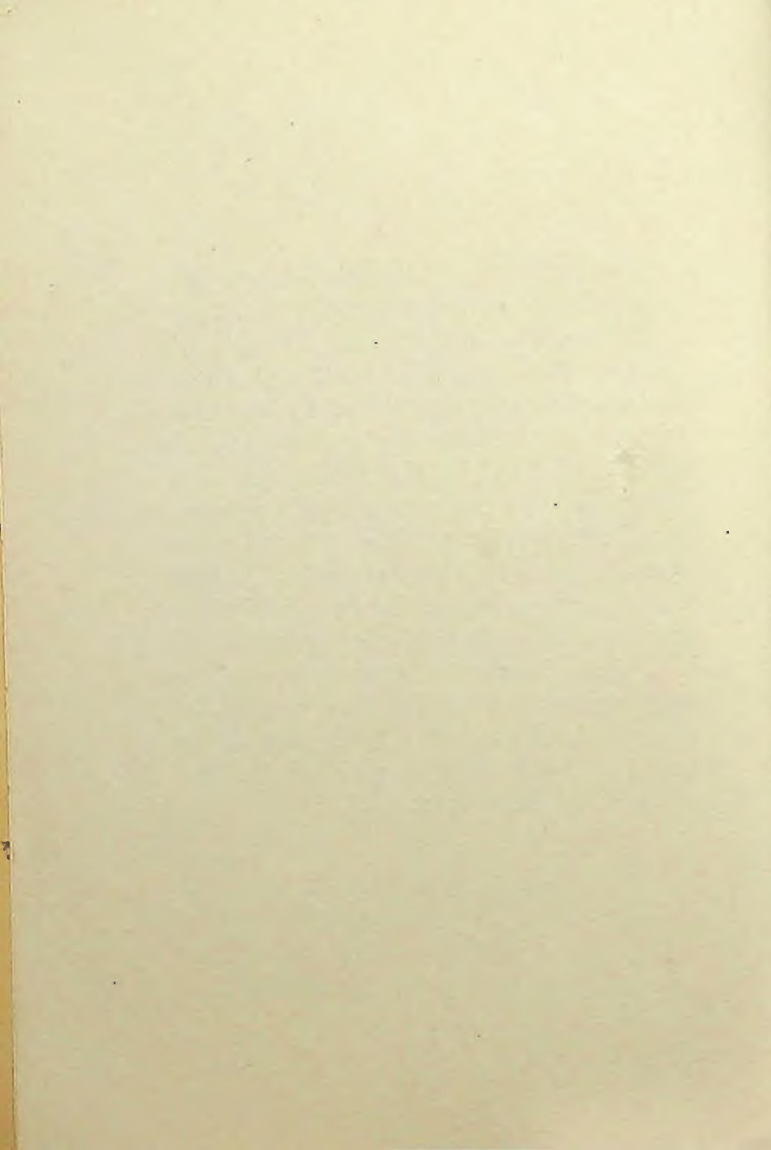
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A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Ranganathananda is the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. This book reproduces the text of a paper contributed by him to a symposium on 'Education and Traditional Values' organized by the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO, New Delhi, on 27 September 1962. In this paper, he deals with the approach of Indian thought, as expounded by Swami Vivekananda, to the problem of cultural continuity in a fast changing historic *milieu*. The paper was earlier published in *Prabuddha Bharata* in May 1965. It is now being issued in book form in view of the importance of the subject.



EDUCATION AND TRADITIONAL VALUES

The subject of 'Education and Traditional Values' should be treated as of utmost importance by our country today, when it is passing through a tremendous transition.

The forces generated by science and the democratic idea have been operating in the modern world for over three centuries to transform human life. Already a vast amount of transformation has taken place in some areas, and the impact is being felt in the rest of the areas of the world as well. Our country has been feeling the effect of these forces in a general way for the past half a century; but since our attainment of political independence and the initiation of our five-year plans, we are being thrown, with increasing momentum

year by year, into the very vortex of these forces. India, today, has to reckon with them. Many an old cultural, social, and religious landmark in our country is crumbling down and vanishing in the wake of the fast-moving pace of our industrialization programmes. Human adjustment to these fast-moving changes in the social and cultural milieu is becoming increasingly difficult. In the absence of such adjustment, man gets twisted and mis-shapen, and becomes a focus of tension and sorrow. A chain is as strong as its weakest link. The modern age in India is the link between her hoary past and her endless future. The modern age demands of our citizens an understanding of these forces, an acceptance of them, and an intelligent assimilation of their values, so that India may forge a new character and a new destiny for herself. This is the problem before Indian education today.

Compared to other countries, there is something special and, if I may say so, significant in the interaction and outcome of these modern forces in the

Indian context. For that context is constituted of a deep and abiding religious consciousness, which derives its strength from a rational and comprehensive philosophy. Since historic times, religion has been the most vital force moulding our individual and collective life ; it is so even today. The Indian tradition is shot through and through by the religious idea and impulse. It has given to the Indian tradition strength and vitality to stand the vicissitudes of her long history, resilience and adaptability to adjust to changing times and conditions, and an amazing assimilative power to synthesize the new with the old, making for continuity in the context of progress. 'For India never ignored,' says Jawaharlal Nehru in his lecture on 'Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda' delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, in 1949, 'in the course of her long history, and in spite of the other activities of the world, the spiritual values of life, and she always laid certain stress on the search for truth and has always welcomed the searchers of truth by whatever

names they may call themselves. And so India built up this tradition of the search for truth and reality, and at the same time she built up the tradition of the utmost tolerance to those who earnestly strive for the truth in their own way.' (*Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*, p. 2)

THE MAIN PROBLEM OF INDIAN EDUCATION

The problem for India in the modern age is the assimilation of the forces released by science, technology, and democracy which are being grafted on to her traditional tree. The success of this experiment depends upon two factors: one, the vitality of the spiritual sap running in the tree, and two, its hospitality to the new forces contained in the grafts.

These new forces in the grafts had their birth first in Europe, and later in other parts of the western world, including the U.S.S.R. They had a revolutionary effect on those countries. The intellectual force of science and the social force of technology and democracy have had devastating effects on the traditional thought and life of the

western man. These new forces could not be assimilated to the western religious consciousness and cultural tradition, which did not prove a hospitable soil to them. The result is a schism in the mind of the western man, indicated by ever-recurrent conflicts—faith in conflict with reason, the spirit at loggerheads with matter, and man in opposition with the universe and with brother man. In such a situation, the human mind despairs of all higher spiritual values, and tends to get involved and entombed in tangible material pursuits. The once powerful Christian and humanist tradition has become reduced to a thin veneer of the more dominant modern tradition.

‘What are the driving forces of our culture?’, asks Mr. C. J. Dippel, Chief Chemist in the Philips Physical Laboratory at Enidhoven, Holland, in his article on ‘Renewal or Leave Taking’ (appearing in *Delta—A Review of Arts, Life and Thought in the Netherlands*, Autumn 1960, p. 17), and continues:

‘Lust for power, productivity, the crea-

tion and satisfaction of needs, speculation on man's material instability, excessive consumption, expansion, an ideology of liberty accompanied by the most primitive rules for the selection of leaders. The cause or the result : an enormous diversity of moral values, varying from a reckless hedonism to a cynical moral vacuum ; speed, turbulence ; an almost automatic compulsion to run after the fruits that our culture holds out to us. The stabilizing factor of our society is its material success and managerial character ; the general herd merely adds its vitality—without responsibility—to the inertia of this cultural movement. It is clear that "things first", "people second" is a guideline that we share with Soviet Communism. Hence the overriding force of economics. The question "what should be done" is decided for us on the free market and in the sphere of power politics. Our Christian past has become a burden and nothing more. We have probably never yet rightly understood the social and cultural implications of the Gospel.'

If even a part of this estimate is true, India has to view with deep concern the outcome of her grafting experiment. Her handling of these new forces, the method and manner of her approach as much as the outcome of her endeavours, is of more than national significance and relevance.

A period of profound transition is not the time for complacency. India has experienced stormy periods in her long history. She has responded successfully to all such challenges, on the strength of her tenacious loyalty to fundamental spiritual values, which she consequently placed at the foundation of her national culture and tradition.

Addressing the assembled congregation at St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, on 24 August 1962, on the occasion of his enthronement as the 11th Metropolitan of India and the 15th Bishop of Calcutta, Rev. Dr. Lakdasa De Mel referred to India's unbroken cultural tradition since the days of the Indus Valley Civilization, and said : 'What had distinguished Indian history during these 5,000 years was the con-

spicuous spiritual quest of the people.'
(*Statesman*, 25 August 1962)

It is this faith in spiritual values, which has been tested in good and evil fortune, that is being challenged and menaced by the most powerful storm yet experienced by her, viz. the modern transition. All the previous challenges were mild in comparison, being only fractional, whereas this one is total. Is there not something in her age-old heritage which has the vitality to welcome these new forces—the intellectual force of tested and verified truth which is science, and the social force of technology and democracy—and assimilate their values into, first, the national heritage and, through that, into the human heritage, so that it may emerge stronger and richer than before? This question widens the scope and deepens the significance of education for our democracy today.

THE SOURCE OF THE VITALITY OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

A long history of five thousand years, uninterrupted and continuous, lies behind

India. Some profound social insight and wisdom must be present in the Indian tradition to account for this miracle of national longevity. It is resilience, adaptability, and assimilative power that enable an organism to live and thrive. Their presence indicates youthfulness; their diminution indicates onset of old age; their total absence spells death. Cultures and civilizations have passed through the three stages of birth, youthful vitality, and old age, to end eventually, invariably, in death. But India has been an exception to this rule. The only conclusion to be drawn from this arresting fact is that, somewhere in the depths of this culture, there must be a focus of undying, youthful vitality, making for fresh outbursts of adaptations and assimilations in times of crisis; so that history, in the case of India, becomes a series of rejuvenations, following each cycle of birth, development, and decay, but never the final death. Writes Will Durant in his *Story of Civilization* (Vol. I, *Our Oriental Heritage*, p. 633):

'One cannot conclude the history of India

as one can conclude the history of Egypt, or Babylonia, or Assyria; for that history is still being made, that civilization is still creating. . . . We cannot claim for this civilization such direct gifts to our own as we have traced to Egypt and the Near East; for these last were the immediate ancestors of our own culture, while the history of India, China, and Japan flowed in another stream, and is only now beginning to touch and influence the current of occidental life. It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry, and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, and spoliation,

India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.'

This continued youthful vitality of India has its origin in her spiritual thought and social philosophy. The Upaniṣads are the source of her spiritual and philosophical thought of which the fundamental ideas are: (1) the divinity of man; (2) the non-duality and spiritual character of the ultimate reality; (3) the basic solidarity of all existence; (4) realization, and not a mere belief or creed, as the criterion of religion; and (5) the harmony of religions. These concepts breathe the spirit of the universal and human, and mark human culture at its highest and best. They gave rise to the values of tolerance, peace, gentleness, and non-aggressiveness, which became the distinctive marks of Indian culture and tradition, finding expression both in individual behaviour and State policy. Religion was, and continues to be, the source and sustenance of this culture

and tradition. India did not allow the universal values and outlook of her religion to be smothered by the limitations of political affiliations. There was no identification of religion and the State. Her concept of religion did not permit a rigid creed or an exclusive, all-powerful church to get established on the Indian soil. Says Dr. Radhakrishnan: 'The emphasis on the goal of spiritual life bound together worshippers of many different types and saved the Hindus from spiritual snobbery.' (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 322)

Absence of rigidity made for hospitality to new ideas. This left the way clear for experimentation from within and assimilation from without. Indian culture, religion, and society bear the impress of this long-continued, and still continuing, experimental and assimilative approach and process. This explains India's diversity and richness, on the one side, and its vitality and uninterrupted continuity, on the other.

THE SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF INDIAN POLITY

Its social philosophy derives from its spiritual thought. Unity in diversity became the ruling idea, and not uniformity. The fact of social change was recognized by her thinkers who, while accepting the need for change, advocated also the need for preserving the continuity of tradition. India's social philosophy enshrines the wisdom of the reconciliation of tradition and change. The central ingredient of this wisdom is enshrined in her concepts of Śruti and Smṛti, and their interrelation. In the light of these concepts, we find that every tradition embodies two elements: (1) a set of universal, eternal, and fundamental principles and (2) a group of values derived from the first, and finding expression in individual and collective attitudes and behaviour. These latter are limited, temporary, and relative in their scope and authority. The first should be upheld, while allowing the second to respond to the urge for change. In Sanskrit, this idea is

expressed by saying that the Smṛtis change, while the Śruti remains. The term 'Śruti' represents the spiritual content of religion and is always meant to be a singular, while the term 'Smṛti' represents its socio-political expression and always denotes a plural. The same idea is expressed in another way. *Dharma* or spiritual tradition has two aspects—the *sanātana dharma* and the *yuga dharma*, tradition eternal and tradition valid for only an epoch or an age. The first connotes the Śruti, and the second the Smṛti. Says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: 'The Hindu view makes room for essential changes. There must be no violent break with social heredity, and yet the new stresses, conflicts, and confusions will have to be faced and overcome. While the truths of spirit are permanent, the rules change from age to age.' (*Religion and Society*, p. 113)

In his 'First Public Lecture in the East', delivered in Colombo on January 15, 1897, on his return from the West, Swami Vivekananda, referring to the impact of Indian spiritual ideas on the modern world,

spoke as follows on the subject of this central ingredient of the wisdom of the Indian tradition :

‘At the same time, I must remark that what I mean by our religion working upon the nations outside of India comprises only the principles, the background, the foundation upon which that religion is built. The detailed workings, the minute points which have been worked out through centuries of social necessity, little ratiocinations about manners and customs and social well-being, do not rightly find a place in the category of religion. We know that, in our books, a clear distinction is made between two sets of truths. The one set is that which abides for ever, being built upon the nature of man, the nature of the soul, the soul’s relation to God, the nature of God, perfection, and so on ; there are also the principles of cosmology, of the infinitude of creation, or more correctly speaking, projection, the wonderful law of cyclical procession, and so on ; these are the eternal principles founded upon the universal laws in nature. The other set

comprises the minor laws, which guide the working of our everyday life. They belong more properly to the Purāṇas, to the Smṛtis, and not to the Śruti. These have nothing to do with the other principles. Even in our own nation these minor laws have been changing all the time. Customs of one age, of one *yuga*, have not been the customs of another, and as *yuga* comes after *yuga*, they will still have to change.' (*The Complete Works*. Vol. III, pp. 111-12, 8th edition)

THE HAPPY OUTCOME OF THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN OUTLOOK

The fruit of this social wisdom is seen in the absence, in ancient and modern Indian history, of violent social upheavals or bloody revolutions ; instead, we see only steady adjustments and adaptations to new situations, keeping basic values intact. The Indian social experience has uniformly been evolution and not revolution ; or rather, evolutionary changes of a revolutionary nature, without, however, serious social conflict and violence. The impact of

Kṛṣṇa and Buddha, Śaṅkara and the later reformers, has always been creative and constructive, peaceful and pervasive. India responded to them in a natural way, and became richer in the process. A study of the history of India shows that the concept of an unchanging Indian society is a thorough misnomer. Both in religious concepts and forms, as well as in social values and processes, India has seen revolutionary changes. 'Those who are familiar with the work of Hindu commentators on Hindu law works', writes Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, 'know the magnitude of the changes effected by them. . . . Social flexibility has been the chief character of Hindu *dharma*. To uphold the *sanātana dharma* is not to stand still. It is to seize the vital principles and use them in modern life. All true growth preserves unity through change.' (*Religion and Society*, pp. 114-15)

Neither the R̥g-Vedic gods and forms of their worship nor the R̥g-Vedic society were in evidence a thousand years after the *R̥g-Veda*. The very fact that there are several Smṛtis indicates social change;

otherwise, the first Smṛti should have continued throughout. But the spiritual legacy of India, as represented by the Śruti, remains steady and clear to this day. Sri Ramakrishna's pithy saying so well explains this changing character of social laws, as represented by the Smṛtis, as nothing else can: 'The Moghul coins have no currency under the (East India) Company's rule.'

The *Manu Smṛti* (I. 85) itself gives eloquent expression to this principle of change:

*Anye kṛtayuge dharmāḥ tretāyām
dvāpare apare ;*

*Anye kaliyuge nṛṇāṃ yugahrāsānu-
rūpataḥ—*

'There is one set of *dharmas* for man in the *kṛta yuga* ; a different set for each of the *tretā*, *dvāpara*, and *kalī yugas* ; the *dharmas* change according to the change of the *yugas*.'

REGENERATION OF INDIA: THE RAMA- KRISHNA—VIVEKANANDA WAY

Modern Indian history also illustrates

abundantly this wisdom of Indian history. The verdict on Indian history by ignorant or prejudiced historians, both Indian and foreign, as well as by unsympathetic foreign social critics, during the last one century, harped on the following themes :

1. Indian society is built on the rigid hierarchy of the caste system.
2. Caste derives its strength and sanction from the Hindu religion.
3. It finds its extreme expression in untouchability.
4. Caste cannot be destroyed without first destroying the Hindu religion.
5. By destroying Hindu religion and caste alone can a new modernized India emerge.
6. Democracy, on the one side, and Hinduism with its caste, on the other, are irreconcilable.
7. The suppression of Hindu women derives from the Hindu religion.
8. Modern technology and industrialism will spell the final death-knell of Hinduism.
9. The various religions of India will

ever remain in water-tight compartments, mutually hostile, if not warring with each other; this fact, added to the pernicious caste system, will never allow India to develop a national consciousness.

It is undoubtedly true that Indian society and the Hindu religion, during the last few centuries, did exhibit the above features in a rather prominent form. But the fault of the critics lay in exhibiting these foibles and follies as the wisdom of India. And the conclusion was clear to them: if these follies were to be overcome and a stagnant India made progressive, she has to cut adrift of her traditional moorings, borrow wisdom from outside, and reshape herself in a completely new way. This led to much iconoclastic thinking and action in the middle of the last century; it created its own counter-force in movements inspired by fear of the new, and in defence of everything old, in religion and society. This action-and-reaction process continued till the end of the century when the age-old, historically tested wisdom of India expressed itself, gently but effectively, in

Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The entire theme of Sri Ramakrishna's life was spirituality. In the words of Gandhiji: 'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. . . . Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. . . . His love knew no limits, geographical or otherwise. May his divine love be an inspiration to all who read the following pages!' (Foreword to *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna*)

Sri Ramakrishna did not disturb any of the existing religions, nor did he start any new religion. He loved all religions and sought God through all of them. Swami Vivekananda carried the mission of his Master far and wide, the mission of the spiritual regeneration of humanity. Within India itself, he saw the main obstacles to this mission in the rigidities and in the decayed elements of the Indian tradition, of which caste-exclusiveness, untouchability, and self-centred religiosity formed the more harmful ones. In his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* and in his *Letters*, he

exposed these faults and foibles of the *Smṛti* elements of the Indian tradition, and placed before the nation the strengthening, unifying, and broadening spirituality of the Upaniṣads, or the Śruti elements of that tradition. He had personally witnessed the power and glory of this Śruti constituent of his country's tradition in the blazing life of his Master. And he, therefore, exhorted the nation to fearlessly do away with the stagnant elements of the national tradition and build a new body-politic, worthy to ensoul the age-old spiritual legacy of India and the scientific and social legacy of the modern world.

THE GALVANIZING EFFECT OF VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE

A few brief quotations from his letters, written from abroad to social workers in India between 1893 and 1897, will help to show how he galvanized the Indian tradition and made it progressive :

‘So you see, we must travel, we must go to foreign parts. We must see how the engine of society works in other countries,

and keep free and open communication with what is going on in the minds of other nations, if we really want to be a nation again.' (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 54, 4th edition)

'I cannot write what I have in my mind about the Japs in one short letter. Only I want that numbers of our young men should pay a visit to Japan every year. To the Japanese, India is still the dreamland of everything high and good. And you, what are you? ... talking twaddle all your lives, vain talkers, what are you? Come, see these people and then go and hide your faces in shame. A race of dotards, you lose your caste if you come out! Sitting down these hundreds of years with an ever-increasing load of crystallized superstition on your heads, for hundreds of years spending all your energy upon discussing the touchableness or untouchableness of this food or that, with all humanity crushed out of you by the continuous social tyranny of ages—what are you? ... Come, be men! Kick out the priests who are always against progress.

... Root out priestcraft first. Come, be men ! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march. Do you love your country ? Then, come, let us struggle for higher and better things ; look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry. Look not back, but forward !" (ibid., pp. 63-64)

'India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men, mind, and not brutes. The English Government has been the instrument brought over here by the Lord to break your crystallized civilization, and Madras supplied the first men who helped in giving the English a footing. How many men, unselfish, thoroughgoing men, is Madras ready now to supply, to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large—and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers ?' (ibid., p. 64)

'A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up—the gospel of equality.

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika* (absolute and relative truth).' '... It is not their fault. They are children, yea, veritable children, though they be great and high in society. Their eyes see nothing beyond their little horizon of a few yards—the routine work, eating, drinking, earning, and begetting, following each other

in mathematical precision. They know nothing beyond, happy little souls! Their sleep is never disturbed. Their nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere—the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny—mental, moral, and physical—that has reduced the image of God to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother, to a slave to bear children; and life itself, a curse. But there are others who see, feel, and shed tears of blood in their hearts, who think that there is a remedy for it, and who are ready to apply this remedy at any cost, even to the giving up of life. And “of such is the Kingdom of Heaven”. (ibid., pp. 68-70)

‘The Hindu must not give up his religion, but must keep religion within its proper limits, and give freedom to society to grow. All the reformers in India made the serious mistake of holding religion accountable for all the horrors of priestcraft and degeneration, and went forthwith to pull down the

indestructible structure, and what was the result ? Failure ! Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohun Roy, everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste altogether, and failed. But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution, which, after doing its service, is now filling the atmosphere of India with its stench, and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality. Every man born here (in U.S.A.) knows that he is a *man*. Every man born in India knows that he is a slave of society. Now, freedom is the only condition of growth ; take that off, the result is degeneration. With the introduction of modern competition see how caste is disappearing fast ! No religion is now necessary to kill it. The Brāhmin shopkeeper, shoemaker, and wine-distiller are common in northern India. And why ? Because of competition. No man is prohibited from doing anything he pleases for his livelihood under the present government, and the

result is neck and neck competition, and thus thousands are seeking and finding the highest level they were born for, instead of vegetating at the bottom.' (ibid., pp. 75-76)

'My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws. Work hard, be steady, and have faith in the Lord. Set to work, I am coming sooner or later. Keep the motto before you: "Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion."

'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course, I am a sympathizer in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not de-

pend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon *the condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and we *will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.’ (ibid., pp. 83-84)

‘This idea of wonderful liberality joined with eternal energy and progress must spread over India, it must electrify the whole nation and must enter the very pores of society, in spite of the horrible ignorance, spite, caste-feeling, old boobyism, and jealousy which are the heritage of this nation of slaves.’ (ibid., p. 87)

‘Social laws were created by economic conditions under the sanction of religion.

The terrible mistake of religion was to interfere in social matters. But how hypocritically it says and thereby contradicts itself: "Social reform is not the business of religion"! True, what we want is that religion should not be a social reformer, but we insist at the same time that religion has no right to become a social law-giver. Hands off! Keep yourself to your own bounds and everything would come right.' (ibid., p. 90)

'The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils; compared with them ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*. That is the great task between our people and princes. Up to now nothing has been done in that direction. Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. They are to be given ideas; their eyes are

to be opened to what is going on in the world around them, and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man, every woman, must work out one's own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization comes in the law of nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India.' (ibid., pp. 109-10)

'The present Hindu society is organized only for spiritual men, and hopelessly crushes out everybody else. Why? Where shall they go who want to enjoy the world a little with its frivolities? Just as our religion takes in all, so should our society. This is to be worked out by first understanding the true principles of our religion, and then applying them to society. This is the slow but sure work to be done.' (ibid., p. 137)

'I do not believe in a religion or God which cannot wipe the widow's tears or

bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.' (ibid., p. 141)

'To my mind, the one great cause of the downfall and the degeneration of India was the building of a wall of custom—whose foundation was hatred of others—round the nation, and the real aim of which in ancient times was to prevent the Hindu from coming in contact with the surrounding Buddhistic nations.

'Whatever cloak ancient or modern sophistry may try to throw over it, the inevitable result—the vindication of the moral law, that none can hate others without degenerating himself—is that the race that was foremost amongst the ancient races is now a byword and a scorn among nations. We are object-lessons of the violation of that law which our ancestors were the first to discover and discriminate.

'Give and take is the law, and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have

to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life and hatred is death. We commenced to die the day we began to hate other races, and nothing can prevent our death unless we come back to expansion, which is life.

'We must mix, therefore, with all the races of the earth. And every Hindu that goes out to travel in foreign parts renders more benefit to his country than hundreds of men who are bundles of superstitions and selfishness and whose one aim in life seems to be like that of the dog in the manger. The wonderful structures of national life which the western nations have raised are supported by the strong pillars of character, and until we can produce numbers of such, it is useless to fret and fume against this or that power.' (ibid., p. 150)

'I fully agree with the educated classes in India that a thorough overhauling of society is necessary. But how to do it? The destructive plans of reformers have failed. My plan is this: We have not done *badly* in the past; certainly not.

Our society is not *bad* but *good*, only I want it to be better still. Not from error to truth, nor from bad to good; but from truth to higher truth, from good to better, best. I tell my countrymen that so far they have done well—now is the time to do better. Now take the case of caste, in Sanskrit, *jāti*, i.e. species. Now this is the first idea of creation. Variation (*vicitratā*), that is to say, *jāti*, means creation. “I am one, I become many” (various Vedas). Unity is before creation, diversity is creation. Now if this diversity stops, creation will be destroyed. So long as any species is vigorous and active it must throw out varieties. When it ceases or is stopped from breeding varieties, it dies. Now the original idea of *jāti* was this freedom of the individual to express his nature, his *prakṛti*, his *jāti*, his caste, and so it remained for thousands of years. Not even in the latest books is inter-dining prohibited; nor in any of the older books is intermarriage forbidden. Then what was the cause of India’s downfall? The giving up of this idea of caste. As the

Gītā says, with the extinction of caste the world will be destroyed. Now does it seem true that with the stoppage of these variations the world will be destroyed? The present caste is not the real *jāti*, but a hindrance to its progress. It really has prevented the free action of *jāti*, i.e. caste or variation. Any crystallized custom or privilege or hereditary class in any shape really prevents caste (*jāti*) from having its full sway, and whenever any nation ceases to produce this immense variety, it must die. Therefore what I have to tell you, my countrymen, is this: that India fell because you prevented and abolished caste. Every frozen aristocracy or privileged class is a blow to caste and is not caste. Let *jāti* have its sway; break down every barrier in the way of caste, and we shall rise. Now look at Europe. When it succeeded in giving free scope to caste and took away most of the barriers that stood in the way of individuals—each developing his caste—Europe rose. In America, there is the best scope for caste (real *jāti*) to develop, and so the people are great.

Every Hindu knows that astrologers try to fix the caste of every boy or girl as soon as he or she is born. That is the real caste, the individuality, and *jyotiṣ* recognized that. And we can only rise by giving it full sway again. This variety does not mean inequality nor any special privilege. This is my method—to show the Hindus that they have to give up nothing but only to move on in the line laid down by the sages and shake off their inertia, the result of centuries of servitude. Of course, we had to stop advancing during the Moham-medan tyranny, for then it was not a question of progress but of life and death. Now that that pressure has gone, we must move forward, not on the lines of destruction directed by renegades and missionaries, but along our own line—our own road. Everything is hideous because the building is unfinished. We had to stop building during centuries of oppression. Now finish the building and everything will look beautiful in its own place. This is all my plan. I am thoroughly convinced of this. Each nation has a main current in

life ; in India it is religion. Make it strong and the waters on either side must move along with it. This is one phase of my line of thought.' (ibid., pp. 191-3)

'My Master used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian, etc. stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers and now only stand as baneful influence under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed.

'That is why I desire so much to have a centre. Organization has its faults, no doubt, but without that nothing can be done. And here, I am afraid, I will have to differ from you—that no one ever succeeded in keeping society in good humour and at the same time did great works. One must work as the dictate comes from within, and then if it is right and good, society is bound to veer round. perhaps centuries after one is dead and gone. We must plunge heart and soul and

body into the work. And until we be ready to sacrifice everything else to one idea and to one alone, we never, never will see the light.

‘Those that want to help mankind must take their own pleasure and pain, name and fame, and all sorts of interests, and make a bundle of them and throw them into the sea, and then come to the Lord. This is what all the masters said and *did*.’ (ibid., p. 211)

‘Do you mean to say I am born to live and die one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards that you find among the educated Hindus? I hate cowardice, I will have nothing to do with cowards or political nonsense. I do not believe in any politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash.’ (ibid., p. 243)

‘What I mean by mentioning all this is that there were many good things in ancient times, but there were bad things too. The good things are to be retained, but the India that is to be, the future

India, must be much greater than ancient India. From the day Sri Ramakrishna was born dates the growth of Modern India and of the Golden Age. And you are the agents to bring about this Golden Age. To work, with this conviction at heart!' (ibid., p. 252)

'From the day when education and culture etc. began to spread gradually from patricians to plebeians, grew the distinction between the modern civilization as of western countries and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e. by spreading education among the masses.' (ibid., p. 367)

THE IMPACT OF RAMAKRISHNA-
VIVEKANANDA ON MODERN INDIA

What was the result of Vivekananda's handling of the Indian tradition? Quoting several stirring passages from Vivekananda's *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, Romain Rolland remarks:

'Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words! The reader almost says with the Indian masses and with Vivekananda himself:

"Śiva! ... Śiva!"

'The storm passed; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving: with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life. ...

'... From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed saw, three years after

Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty

"Lazarus, Come forth!"

of the message from Madras.' (*Life of Vivekananda*, pp. 124-5)

Again :

'So India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own *sannyāsins*; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism sleeping beneath, broke its bounds, and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by this means. The world finds itself face to face with an awakening India. ... Whatever the part played in this reawakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century (the greatest of whom we salute, the precursor : Ram

Mohun Roy), the decisive call was the trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras. And the magic watchword was unity. Unity of every Indian man and woman (and world-unity as well); of all the powers of the spirit: dream and action, reason, love, and work. Unity of the hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand gods. . . . Unity of the thousand sects of Hinduism. Unity within the vast ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, western and eastern'. (ibid., pp. 316-17)

Dealing with the spiritual source of modern India's social adjustment, through the activation of the Śruti content of its tradition, Rolland continues :

"This "greater India", this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thought into action dominates and guides

her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilizing it. The present leaders of India: the king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi.' (ibid., pp. 317-18)

The Indian tradition was fortunate to have a leader and innovator of the spiritual stature and credentials of Swami Vivekananda. Speaking about the impact of Vivekananda on Indian life and thought, Jawaharlal Nehru says:

'I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and the writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, and they would learn

much from them.' (*Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*, p. 4)

Referring to the contemporary relevance of Vivekananda's ideas, he says :

'If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will feel is that they are not old. It was told 56 years ago, and they are fresh to-day, because what he wrote or spoke about dealt with certain fundamental matters and aspects of our problems or the world's problems.' (*ibid.*, p. 5)

Speaking further about Vivekananda's influence on Indian politics, he says :

'He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like you may use any other word—of the national movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom,

of spirit and fire that flows through Swami Vivekananda.' (ibid., pp. 6-7)

Swami Vivekananda educated the Indian mind to discriminate between the essentials and the non-essentials of the national tradition, and to welcome and assimilate the modern forces of progress. This form of social education can be done effectively only by a towering spiritual personality. Says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: 'Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings have prepared us for the new age of freedom in which we live. They tell us how best we can consolidate the freedom we have won.' (*Speeches and Writings*, Vol. II, p. 191)

The fruits of this spiritual education of a whole people can be seen in the impressive achievements of India during the last sixty years in the field of fundamental social reform. Many of these reforms, such as removal of untouchability, opening of temples to the Harijans, reform and codification of Hindu law, ignoring of caste by the constitution as a factor in inter-group relationships, breaking down of caste barriers, and even creed and race barriers,

with respect to eating and marriage, and disappearance of opposition to sea voyage and foreign travel, are radical measures. Many of these are legal enactments backed by enlightened public opinion. They never gave rise to social conflicts, in spite of their radical impact on the old tradition; they helped, on the other hand, in the growth and renewal of that tradition.

The awakening of the Indian women and their rise to positions of the highest responsibility is another striking aspect of this peaceful evolution and growth of the Indian tradition in the modern age. It is noteworthy that, unlike several western countries, India did not experience a feminist movement; the significance of this fact lies in the way it reveals the social wisdom of the Indian tradition. It is when a world-view goes counter to the claims and aspirations of women, and men uphold that world-view as against the spirit of the times, that a feminist movement takes place. This is the experience of modern western history. But in India, men came forward to uphold the claims of women and

move with the times; and in this they were sustained as much by the spiritual constituents of the Indian tradition as by the recent orientation of that tradition by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

The absence of opposition in India to social reform measures such as family planning, as noted by international study groups, is another instance of the adaptive character of the Indian tradition.

The Indian constitution, with its broad democratic base and equalitarian objective, bears the touch of the wisdom and broad outlook of the Indian tradition and its capacity for assimilation. And the healthy functioning of democracy in India, and the success of its three general elections, involving over 200 million voters, the most stupendous democratic phenomenon in the world today, is another fruit of the vitality and wisdom of the national tradition.

NEED FOR A BALANCED OUTLOOK BETWEEN THE ANCIENT AND THE MODERN

Technological advance is bound to affect profoundly and recast in a revolutionary

way our culture and tradition. But it will be only its peripheral aspects that will be so affected. And, thanks to the education received by the nation from its great spiritual and social leaders like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, this recasting of the peripheral aspects will not only cause no concern, but will cause only satisfaction to enlightened Indian minds. But there is imperative need to stress the validity and relevance of the central aspects of our tradition if the fast-coming peripheral changes are not to blow away the whole tradition itself. This is where the role of national education comes in. *The nation needs to be continually educated in the abiding spiritual constituents of its tradition.* As Vinobaji and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru have been expounding it in recent years, science must be combined with spirituality ; or Vedānta is to be coupled with modern science, as Vivekananda long ago expressed it in his formulation of the content of Indian education.

· Spirituality is the positive content of the

Indian tradition ; it is its undying constituent. The Upaniṣads are its fountain-source. The *Īśa* is one of the oldest of these Upaniṣads. It has been a source of deep inspiration to Indian thinkers and seekers in ancient and modern times. It asks man to feel the pulsations of the Divine in life and nature, and enjoy with zest the full life span of a hundred years through renunciation. '*Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ*—Enjoy through renunciation'—is its watchword. This idea was later developed by the *Gītā* into a comprehensive and practical spirituality, in its theory of detached action. Renunciation becomes joyous when it leads to higher levels of being and purer forms of delight. This positive concept of renunciation is the central concept of ethics, of *dharma*, in Indian thought. This dynamic teaching of practical spirituality has tremendous consequences for man and society ; for the emphasis here is on character, leading to universality of vision, on the one side, and social efficiency, on the other. Life is viewed in a context of progress, development, realization, with

the infinitude of being as the target of achievement. This man-making message was communicated to our country by Swami Vivekananda in a brief statement of national educational policy : 'Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India ; intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.'

Since political independence, our national leaders have taken much pains to criticize again and again the negative features of the Indian tradition. One of the targets of attack has been Hindu communalism. There is no doubt that there are some narrow-minded communalists among the Hindus. But that such narrow communalism is not a prominent characteristic of the Hindu people as a whole, or of their tradition, is proved by the fact that even the shock of partition of the country on communal grounds did not result in the Hindu community voting for a Hindu communal state in India, and that behind the broad secular constitution of the nation is the sustenance and support of the broad masses and enlightened sections of the

Hindu community. The spirit of inclusiveness of the Hindu tradition is fully evident here; and we cannot but recall what Swami Vivekananda said on the subject of the Hindu tradition while addressing the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893: 'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 3)

Castecism and untouchability have also been constantly exposed with a view to ridding India of these evils and making democracy a living reality. The public have received, through these and other criticisms by our national leaders, a measure of social education, which is very valuable; but, unfortunately, this educational process has been one-sided: it has exposed only the faults and foibles of the Indian tradition without directing the people's mind to the positive and permanent constituents of this tradition. This has resulted in creating an impression in the people, especially in the youths, that their

country's tradition is mostly obsolete and that there is nothing in it worth preserving. This has had, and is having, a highly deleterious effect on the national mind, national character, and work efficiency, by undermining its faith in the nation's legacy and, consequently, weakening its ability and strength to assimilate the best in the modern heritage.

This has to be corrected by our education. Education should acquaint the people with the life-giving, abiding, positive elements of the Indian tradition ; this alone will help to forge a spiritually and socially efficient national character. In this field, the importance of Vivekananda literature in toning up and invigorating our education cannot be over-estimated.

None had criticized the faults and foibles of the Indian tradition more vehemently than Vivekananda ; but he did not stop with mere criticism and exposure. He also held before the people the glorious and imperishable, the pure and positive, constituents of their national tradition, and also showed the way of enriching the

national tradition by assimilation of the tested values of modern experience.

The progressive adaptation of the Hindu tradition to the requirements of the modern age, and the liberation of its universal spiritual values, will also help in the realization of a similar integration by the Islamic, Christian, Parsee, and other great traditions of India. They will also learn to shed the parochial and outworn elements of their traditions, and liberate their universal and human contents. It is only thus that the process of nation-building in India will be consummated, and a free, equalitarian, spiritually oriented body-politic provided for India's undying soul.

OBJECTIVES OF OUR EDUCATION: WHAT
THEY OUGHT TO BE

Our educational vision has to grasp the whole of India as a perennial laboratory for the achievement of human integration. Her immense variety and diversity, natural as well as human, which she has studiously fostered, form the data for its science of man and society. Based on the universal

concept of man's divinity, she achieved in the past a measure of cultural unity and human integration which has stood firm against many a political cataclysm of long or short durations. The legacy so left is our starting-point. It has now to be enriched extensively as well as intensively, both within India as well as outside. This is very much facilitated by the world conditions created by the modern technological civilization. A nation's educational policy, like its political policy, gets added dynamism and direction when to its domestic policy is added a foreign policy content as well. The spiritually liberated man is the aim of Indian education: '*Yā vidyā sā vimuktaye*—That is knowledge which liberates'; and it was of this Indian educational vision that Rabindranath Tagore sang in a famous passage of his *Gītāñjali* (35):

Where the mind is without fear and the
head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken

up into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;

Where words come out from the depth of truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Swami Vivekananda defines education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Similarly, he defines religion as the manifestation of the divinity already in man. Religion, according to him, is also a process of education ; in fact, it becomes continued education. This synoptic view finds eloquent expression in one of his oft-quoted passages :

‘Each soul is potentially divine ; the goal is to manifest this Divine within by controlling nature, external as well as internal.’

This is his concept of complete education in which man achieves social welfare by the mastery of the external environment through scientific and technological efficiency, and he achieves spiritual enrichment by the mastery of his inner life through religion.

Education so defined should place before itself clear objectives, if it is to find expression in practical measures of implementation. In the light of all that has been discussed above, we can discern six objectives for our education :

1. The training of our children to an appreciation of our nation's cultural heritage and to equip them with the desire and the capacity to enhance the same and leave to posterity a richer legacy.

2. The training of our children in talents and capacities by which they become productive units of society and the source of its economic strength.

3. The equipment of our children with the qualities of courage and vision to protect our newly won national freedom, to preserve its democratic structure, function,

and liberties, and to carry the same to ever wider fields and ever higher levels.

4. The training of our children in virtues and graces that will make them emotionally stable individuals and enable them to live in peace, harmony, and co-operation with their fellow citizens.

5. The training of our children in virtues and graces that will make them international in their outlook and sympathies, and enable them to live in peace, harmony, and co-operation with the emerging world community.

6. The training of our children to an awareness of the spiritual and trans-social dimension of the human personality, and to a converging life-endeavour in the realization of this fact in and through life and action.

It is only thus that our education will become a fit discipline to help to continue the march of the Indian tradition from an impressive past to a glorious future.



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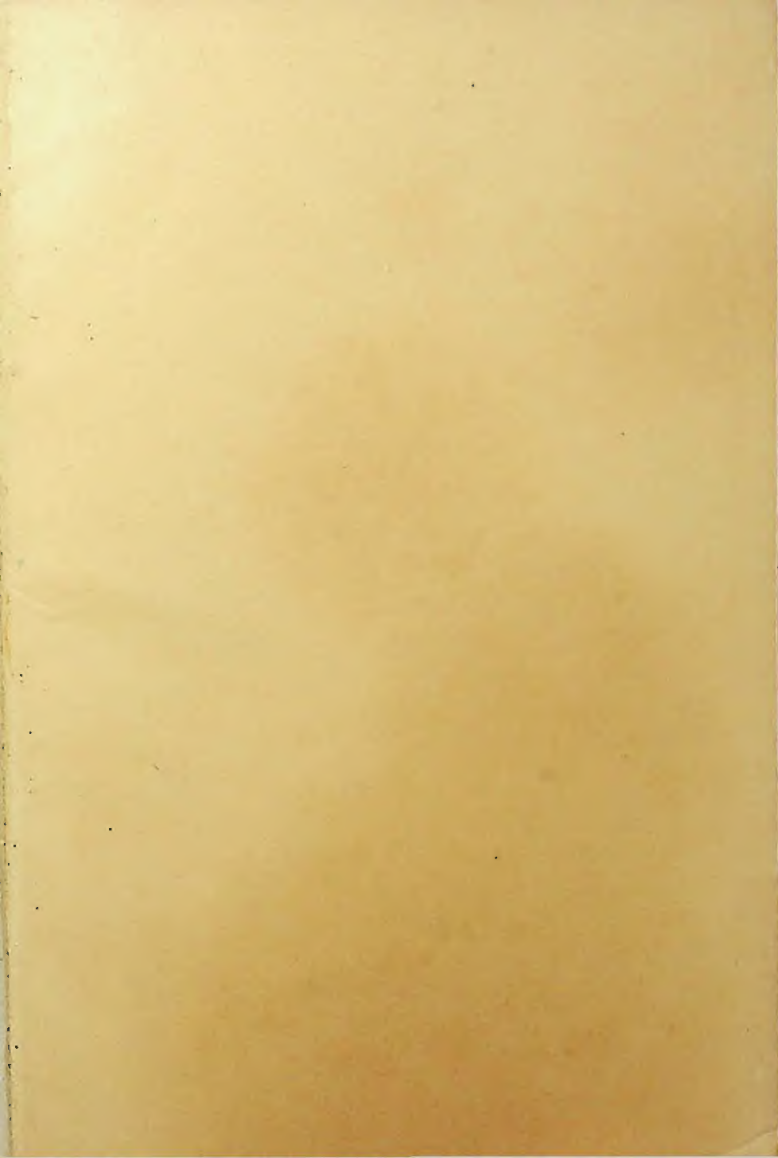
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